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Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*

Singapore

Addendum

Views on conclusions and/or recommendations, voluntary commitments and replies presented by the State under review

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1. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has provided a useful opportunity to take stock of our progress and to engage our citizens and civil society.

2. Our longstanding goal has been to build a nation where our citizens lead meaningful and happy lives in a fair and inclusive society. Our pragmatic policies have enabled the broad-based uplift of all communities within a single generation and forged a nation out of diversity. To better meet the challenges of globalisation, new technology and evolving social changes, we have implemented new policies to strengthen social safety nets and enhance social harmony. We will continue to apply the rule of law – which is a necessary pre-condition for respecting the fundamental human rights and freedoms enshrined in our Constitution – and uphold the core principles of secularism, meritocracy and multi-racialism. With these principles in mind, our Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights has carefully reviewed the 236 recommendations that Singapore received at the 24th UPR Working Group.

3. We support, or are already implementing, many of the recommendations that are consistent with our ongoing efforts to build a fair and inclusive society. There are also some recommendations whose objectives we agree with, but have a difference of opinion on the specific actions to be pursued.

4. Recommendations that do not enjoy our support are those predicated on unfounded assertions, inaccurate assumptions or erroneous information. We also cannot implement recommendations that are not appropriate in our national context. Indeed, in certain cases, we have policies that address the underlying specific objective being proposed in the recommendation but are implemented in ways that are more suited for our unique social and cultural context.

5. About a quarter of the recommendations that we noted relate to the ratification of international human rights treaties. Singapore takes our treaty obligations seriously and engages actively with the relevant treaty bodies. We also have a process under our Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights to actively review Singapore's ability to ratify additional human rights treaties. Since we cannot prejudge the outcome of the review process, we are unable to commit ourselves to ratifying any of these specific treaties at this time, apart from the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OP-CRC-SC), for which a review has already been completed. While Singapore may not be party to a particular human rights treaty yet, it does not mean that our outcomes are not already fully or largely in compliance with its objectives.

Building a fair and inclusive society through better social protection

6. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.5, 166.99, 166.121, 166.122, 166.124 and 166.125.** We are committed to the protection and promotion of our citizens' human rights. Singapore will continue to engage UN human rights mechanisms constructively.

Support for lower income Singaporeans

7. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.112, 166.115, 166.116, 166.214, 166.215, 166.216, 166.220 and 166.221.** We strive to maintain social harmony by strengthening social safety nets to better support vulnerable groups.

8. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.212.** We support helping low wage workers, but we have alternative schemes that are more effective than a minimum wage scheme in our context. "Workfare" is a national income supplementation scheme which tops up the income and retirement savings of low wage workers. Our Progressive Wage Model is a wage-skill ladder that links wages to training and improvements in productivity. This means that workers in certain sectors will get higher wages as they become better skilled, more productive and take on more responsibilities.

Education

9. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.211, 166.222, 166.223 and 166.224.** We are committed to providing good education and creating opportunities for life-long learning for every Singaporean.

10. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.47.** Our current education policies are already aligned to the relevant clauses on non-discrimination and the right to education in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), to which Singapore is party, as well as the ICERD, which Singapore intends to ratify in 2017.

Healthcare

11. **Singapore supports recommendation 166.218.** Under the Healthcare 2020 Master Plan, we are committed to providing quality and affordable medical services for all Singaporeans. Our health outcomes are amongst the best in the world.

12. **Singapore supports recommendation 166.155.** Prevention and public education are the mainstays of our national HIV/AIDS control programme.

13. **Singapore supports recommendation 166.219.** Non-medical practitioners in Singapore may be subject to prosecution if they are found to have performed invasive procedures, or use certain controlled medicinal products (e.g. antibiotics and steroids).

An ageing society

14. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.105, 166.128, 166.129 and 166.217** and has introduced policies and programmes to realise our vision of building "A Nation for All Ages", including a S$3 billion Action Plan for Successful Ageing under the Ministerial Committee on Ageing.

15. **Singapore supports recommendation 166.97.** We intend to enact the Vulnerable Adults Act in 2016 to provide for early intervention and better protection for vulnerable adults, such as the elderly, from abuse and harm due to neglect and self-neglect.

Rights of women

16. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.65, 166.66, 166.67, 166.81, 166.106, 166.114, 166.141, 166.142, 166.143, 166.144, 166.145, 166.146, 166.147, 166.148, 166.149, 166.208, 166.209 and 166.210** on the promotion of gender equality, the elimination of gender discrimination, and the empowerment of women and girls. Singapore supports recommendation 166.151 and supports in part recommendation 166.150. Vulnerable families, including unwed single mothers, receive social support from the

Government. The Government will continue to review its efforts to support single mothers. This is in addition to the Government's commitment to provide all Singaporean children with education and healthcare support.

17. **Singapore supports in part recommendations 166.82, 166.83, 166.84, and 166.85.** There is a robust legislative framework that criminalises acts of domestic violence and acts of violence against women, under the Women's Charter, the Children and Young Persons Act and the Penal Code. We are also actively working towards repealing marital rape immunity.

18. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.25.** Singapore is committed to implementing its obligations under CEDAW while maintaining our current reservations to CEDAW. **We note recommendations 166.62 166.63 and 166.64.** The Singapore Constitution enshrines the principle of equality of all persons before the law. This provision encompasses non-discrimination in relation to women. In addition to the Constitution, the rights of women are protected in legislation such as the Employment Act, the Women's Charter, the Children and Young Persons Act, the Penal Code, the Protection from Harassment Act and the Prevention of Human Trafficking Act. Any aggrieved woman is able to seek redress under such laws.

Rights of children

19. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.98, 166.108, 166.174, 166.175 and 166.197** as Singapore is fully committed to our obligations under the CRC. We will move towards implementing specific policy recommendations, insofar as they are consistent with our social and cultural context, and are in the best interests of our children.

20. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 166.96.** Persons born to Singaporean mothers before 15 May 2004 already have an opportunity to acquire citizenship by registration under current laws. We are thus of the view that there is no need to review our present nationality laws. **Singapore also notes recommendation 166.234** on granting citizenship automatically to children born in Singapore.

21. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.35, 166.36, 166.38, 166.39, 166.40 and 166.41** to accede to the OP-CRC-SC. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 166.23.** While we agree to accede to the OP-CRC-SC, we are unable to agree to accede to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers (ICRMW) for the reasons outlined at paragraph 5.

22. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.37** as our reservations and declarations to the CRC remain relevant.

23. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.196.** Our priority is to provide early intervention and rehabilitation tailored to the needs of each child.

Persons with disabilities

24. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.225, 166.226, 166.227, 166.229, 166.230 and 166.231** to provide quality education, healthcare and employment opportunities to persons with disabilities.

25. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.228 and 166.232.** Singapore is committed to ensuring that children with disabilities receive quality education. Our current policy allows us greater flexibility in supporting children with disabilities by providing customised

curriculum and pedagogy as well as other forms of non-educational support to help them meet their educational needs.

Trafficking in persons

26. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.178, 166.179, 166.180, 166.181, 166.182, 166.183, 166.184, 166.185, 166.186, 166.187, 166.188, 166.189 and 166.190** to combat human trafficking.

Labour rights

27. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.79, 166.94, 166.130, 166.132, 166.133, 166.135, 166.136, 166.137 and 166.140.** Singapore is committed to protecting the rights and well-being of migrant workers. We have enacted laws, such as the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act, Employment Agencies Act and Foreign Employee Dormitories Act, to protect the rights of migrant workers, and in appropriate cases, to provide for added protection to cater to their unique vulnerabilities.

28. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 166.138 and notes recommendation 166.131** as they do not apply to Singapore's context. The majority of migrant workers in Singapore are temporary guest workers, who regard Singapore as a place of work and not a place to settle with their families permanently.

29. **Singapore supports in part recommendation 166.134 and notes recommendation 166.213.** While foreign domestic workers are not covered under Singapore's Employment Act, they are provided with other legislative protections and robust policies to ensure their well-being.

30. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.61, 166.95 and 166.139.**

31. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.60.** Singapore strongly supports the principle of non-discrimination in the workplace. Our preferred approach is to encourage employers to adopt fair employment practices through the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP), which sets guidelines for employers to treat their employees fairly and with respect, and refrain from discriminatory practices, rather than a legislative approach which may add market rigidities without addressing discriminatory practices. Errant employers are sanctioned.

Ratification of treaties

32. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.1, 166.2, 166.10, 166.22, 166.56, 166.58 and 166.59** to keep international human rights treaties under review.

33. **We note recommendations 166.3, 166.4, 166.9, 166.12, 166.13, 166.14, 166.15, 166.16, 166.19, 166.26, 166.27, 166.28, 166.29, 166.30, 166.31, 166.32, 166.34, 166.42, 166.43, 166.44, 166.45, 166.46, 166.48, 166.49, 166.50, 166.51, 166.52, 166.53, 166.54 and 166.55** for the reasons outlined at paragraph 5.

Establishment of a national human rights institution

34. **We note recommendations 166.57, 166.100, 166.101, 166.102, 166.103 and 166.104** to establish a national human rights institution. Singapore is firmly committed to the rule of law. We have put in place interlocking legislation, institutions and mechanisms

that allow us to promote and protect the human rights of all Singaporeans. Singaporeans, including those with limited means, have many direct avenues to air their grievances. Our parliamentarians, including the Prime Minister and his Ministers, hold weekly "Meet-the-People" sessions in their respective electoral constituencies during which any citizen can raise issues or concerns directly. We have an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights comprising 15 Government agencies that engages civil society and coordinates the implementation of cross-cutting human rights policies.

35. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.126 and 166.127.** We consider requests from UN Special Procedures on a case-by-case basis. We also invite Special Procedures mandate holders whose expertise is relevant to our development. The Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons Ms Rosa Kornfeld-Matte has accepted our invitation to visit Singapore in the second half of 2016.

36. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.110 and 166.235** on implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and raising awareness on climate change respectively.

37. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.107.** We already promote corporate social responsibility and sustainable development.

Building a fair and inclusive society by preserving social harmony

A Safe and Secure Singapore

38. **Singapore supports recommendation 166.191** to preserve the rule of law.

39. **Singapore supports recommendation 166.236.** We have various programmes to counter and prevent radicalisation, violent extremism and terrorism.

40. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.173, 166.193, 166.194 and 166.195** as the Criminal Law (Temporary Provisions Act) and the Internal Security Act remain relevant to enable the Government to take swift pre-emptive action to counter serious threats against public order or national security.

41. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.11, 166.17, 166.18, 166.20, 166.21, 166.24, 166.33, 166.80, 166.156, 166.157, 166.158, 166.159, 166.160, 166.161, 166.162, 166.163, 166.164, 166.165, 166.166, 166.167, 166.168, 166.169, 166.170, 166.171 and 166.172** on the abolition of capital punishment or corporal punishment for the reasons explained comprehensively to our UPR Working Group.

42. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.176 and 166.177.** National Service remains critical to Singapore's defence as it underpins our peace and prosperity, and safeguards our independence and sovereignty.

43. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.93 and 166.233.** Singapore is not in a position to accept refugees and asylum seekers given our constraints as a small city State. Nonetheless, Singapore views the humanitarian treatment of such persons very sympathetically and has cooperated with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to ensure their proper care and treatment.

Racial and religious harmony

44. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.6, 166.7, 166.8, 166.109, 166.111, 166.113, 166.117, 166.118, 166.119, 166.120, 166.123, 166.152, 166.198 and 166.199.** Maintaining racial and religious harmony has been a top priority for the Government since our independence. Singapore will ratify the ICERD in 2017.

45. **We support recommendations 166.153 and 166.192.** Our Constitution enjoins the Government to care for the interests of the Malays. The practice of Muslim law in Singapore is progressive, and takes into account evolving societal contexts and norms.

LGBT community

46. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.154.** LGBTI content is permitted so long as it meets the current media guidelines, which are revised periodically in accordance with societal values. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.68, 166.69, 166.70, 166.71, 166.72, 166.73, 166.74, 166.75, 166.76, 166.77 and 166.78.** Singapore's policy on this issue has been explained to our UPR Working Group.

Freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association

47. **Singapore supports recommendations 166.89, 166.91, 166.201, 166.202 and 166.203.** The rights to freedom of expression, association and of peaceful assembly are guaranteed in our Constitution. These rights must be exercised in accordance with the rule of law and in the context of broader societal interests.

48. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.86, 166.92 and 166.205** as they are predicated on unfounded assertions. Singapore's Societies Act and laws on defamation are already consistent with the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, as enshrined in the Singapore Constitution. In Singapore, any individual can defend their reputation against defamation through private lawsuits in the civil courts. Criminal defamation under S.499 of the Penal Code is only used for severe forms of defamation that can cause significant negative social impact.

49. **Singapore notes recommendation 166.200** as it is predicated on unfounded assertions. We place great importance on the credibility of public institutions and political leaders. Trust and reputation are invaluable assets in Government which we would not want to see debased. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.87 and 166.206**, which are based on inaccurate assumptions. Our laws allow our citizens to enjoy the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, while protecting the larger public interests of preserving public order and security.

50. **Singapore notes recommendations 166.88, 166.90 and 166.204.** Singaporeans have constitutionally protected rights to freedom of speech and expression. As recognised by other nations, and under international human rights law, these are not unqualified rights. For example, limits on these rights are recognised, including those prescribed by law and which may be necessary for the respect of the rights of others, or for protection of national security, public order or public health or morals. Our media laws and regulations maintain this balance in accordance with the values of the broader Singaporean society.

Elections

51. Singapore notes recommendation 166.207. Elections in Singapore have always been conducted in a fair and transparent manner in strict adherence to the law.